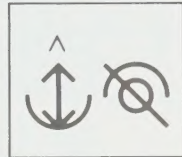


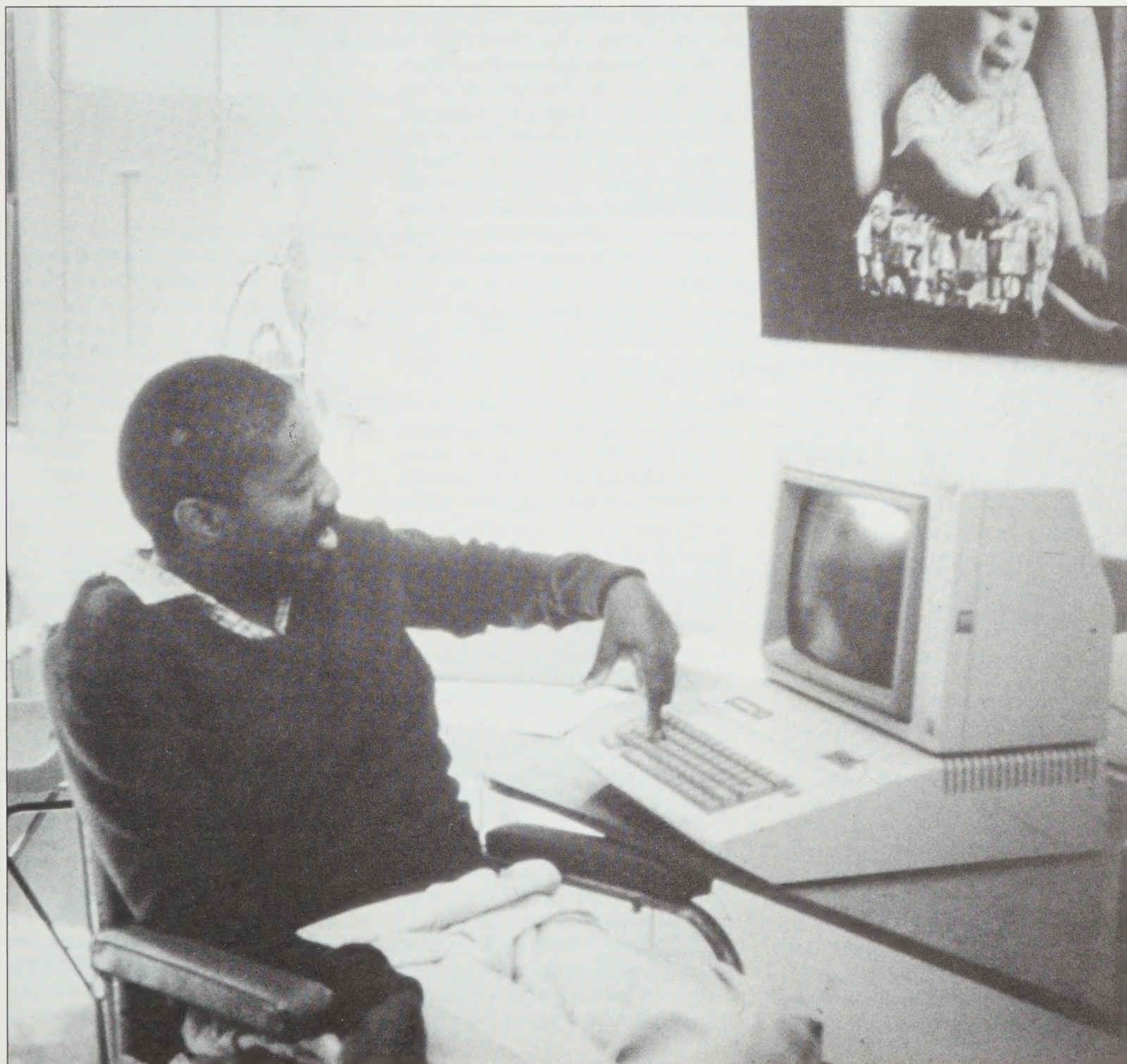
COMMUNICATING TOGETHER



A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE ABOUT AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 1

MARCH 1989



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VOL. 7, NO. 1

MARCH 1989

Established November 1982

Published quarterly by the Easter Seal
Communication Institute, a division of
The Easter Seal Society.

Coordinator of Service: Shirley McNaughton
Editor: Ann Kennedy
Subscriptions: Cindy Stall
Design: Jack Steiner
Typesetting and Printing:
The Beacon Herald, Stratford, Ontario

Cover Picture: Madoda Mashila, second year law student
at University of South Africa and member of Interface.

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Second Class Mail Registration No. 7093

Communicating Together is published quarterly as a means of sharing the experiences and communication systems of nonspeaking people with their families, communities and the professionals who work with them.

The cover design reflects, directly and indirectly, the many techniques that contribute to augmentative communication: pictures, drawings, signing, Blissymbols, words and technology.

Back Issues: Limited number available, \$5. Canadian funds. Subscription Rate: \$22. per year Canadian funds, \$19. per year U.S. funds. Subscriptions outside North America \$27, per year Canadian funds. ISAAC Members \$5. discount on each of the above rates.

Direct correspondence regarding subscriptions, back issues, contributions, sponsoring, advertising, address changes and bulk mailings to:

Communicating Together
Easter Seal Communication Institute
250 Ferrand Drive
Don Mills, Ontario, Canada M3C 3P2

Communicating Together is an affiliated publication of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC).

The Publisher

The Easter Seal Communication Institute (ESCI) wishes to recognize and thank the Pilot Club International, Ontario District, for its support in sponsoring sections of *Communicating Together*.

ESCI gratefully acknowledges funding by the Kiwanis Club of Toronto to support the typesetting font development. Blissymbols presented herein have been electronically typeset.

ESCI is a member of the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled (CRCDD) and the Canadian Periodical Publishers Association (PCPPA).

Ontario Society for Crippled Children, income tax donation registration No. 0003285-11.

ANNALU WALLER



Frequently our cover story describes an augmentative communicator and his or her achievements. In this issue, we are sharing the story and accomplishments of a young professional, beginning her training in her own country, South Africa, but quickly realizing she must learn from the world, and setting out to do just that!

Annalu Waller herself has cerebral palsy — but it must be mentioned only in reference to her increased sensitivity toward the life experiences of the disabled. It has given her the knowledge and strength to embark upon a career that we know will someday benefit augmentative communicators in many countries.

In 1983, I was looking for a career — determined not to direct my computer science degree toward the usual commercial applications. I wanted to see technology enhancing the abilities of people. Unable to find a job that related to my goals, and rather than begin a programming role in an area that didn't interest me, I decided to continue studying for an honours degree. While looking for a topic for my disserta-

tion, I was confronted one day by a magazine cover. Its illustration contained a computer keyboard with the symbol for disability on the return key. This issue of *Byte* magazine was to change my life! I read the volume from cover to cover and upon completion, knew I just had to undertake some type of application related to the handicapped.

Having no experience in the rehabilitation field, my adviser squashed any such idea. But I was to have my chance! During my study year, an engineering friend showed me an information pamphlet on the University of Capetown's recently established Biomedical Engineering Department and that was the second step toward my new career. I had already decided I must continue studying but now I could turn to biomedical engineering. I was very fortunate to have as my supervisor and motivating force, Dr. David Boonzaier, head of the Rehabilitation Section of the department.

I no sooner got involved within the biomedical engineering degree program, than I was approached to join a steering committee toward the development of an organization which eventually became Interface. (See *Communicating Together*, Volume 5, Number 3.) And this is how I came to know Rina Van der Walt, a talented professional who was to help me further in discovering my career direction. How exciting to meet someone with whom I could share my aspirations regarding the application of technology for the disabled. Rina had been in Switzerland giving speech therapy courses, and while there, had seen what they were doing with computers. She had returned to Eros, the school in which she was head speech and hearing therapist, and shared with her colleagues the capabilities of the Carbalinguaduc Check spelling system. A unit was purchased for the school and this provided the beginning of our practical learning experi-

ences.

Rina was the instigator of the steering committee and through our association in working toward Interface, she helped me realize the importance of technology for those who lacked functional speech. Her speech therapy experience and my computer science interest combined to bring a sense of direction to the group.

Shelly - Pointing Out the Challenge

And now came the next major influence on my planning! Two of the most dedicated members of the group, Mike and Shona MacDonald, introduced me to what would become the fundamental issue to be addressed by Interface — the challenges that faced educators who were teaching children with multi-sensory impairments. The MacDonald's daughter, Shelly, was a very special two-year-old. She had cerebral palsy and could not use her body in any controlled way. In addition, she had a severe hearing loss and was formally assessed as having a cognitive impairment. This assessment precluded her from attending the local school for cerebral palsied children. As was often the response from special schools, uncertainty as to her scholastic potential was used as an excuse not to enroll her as a pupil.

We were able to develop a toy library from which Shelly could benefit and she was introduced to photographs and signing, but schooling as a nonretarded youngster was not open to her.

In fact, Shelly would have had better opportunities had she been non-white. For Rina Van der Walt's enthusiasm had, by this time, stimulated an exciting program at Eros, the school for non-white cerebral palsied children.

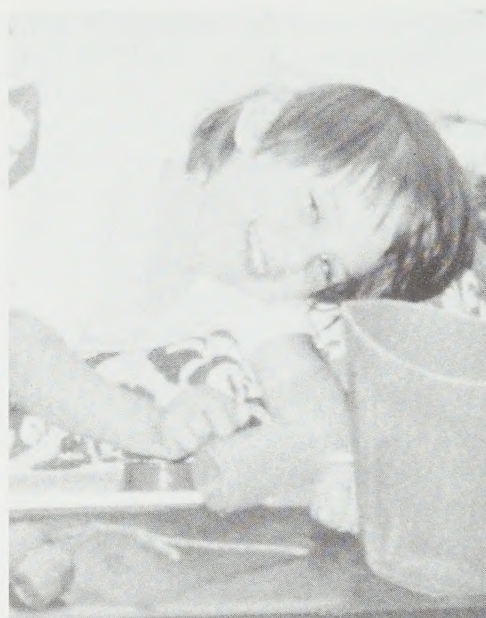
Thanks to the perseverance of her parents however, to-day, at age six, Shelly is an alert and vital member

of her family. She has mastered the operation of her wheelchair (not however without frightening the life out of her mother, by driving down the back stairs, landing on the laptray!). She uses her chair for communication by driving to the thing she wants. Her mother, her speech and physiotherapists, her teacher and myself, have helped her develop an augmentative communication system over the years. Her severe hearing loss has necessitated a "teaching through action" approach. Hand signs have been used from the start as a receptive communication system and Shelly has a large receptive vocabulary. Her expressive language, however, is still inadequate. Shelly has progressed from photographs, to Picture Communication Symbols, to Blissymbols and is able to recognize many symbols. However, she is very unwilling to use the symbols functionally, knowing that her mother understands most of her personal signals.

Schooling continues to be a problem, as the special schools in Cape Town have been reluctant to accept Shelly as a pupil. The school for the deaf has little knowledge of physical disability, and the school for cerebral palsied children does not cater to deaf children. As a result, Shelly has been attending a regular nursery school. Although this arrangement has provided some learning to both Shelly and the other children, it is obvious that she now could benefit from a far more specialized environment.

Shelly's development over the years has been exciting. However, her growing frustration points to a need for a more structured classroom environment in which communication interaction is stressed. For example, Shelly is very specific when it comes to mealtime, and it is during this time that an activity board showing all the food options could be used effectively. She has already shown the ability to recognize graphic representations and can point within a small range. Encour-

aging her to use the board instead of choosing from all the concrete options brought out one by one, would undoubtedly reinforce expressive communication.



Shelly MacDonald at age four.

My work at Eros

I was delighted to begin my rehabilitation work at Eros, as a special education teacher within a multi-racial staff developing a new program. In response to a growing need for support for augmentative communication and thanks to the efforts of Rina Van der Walt and her colleagues, the new program was formed at Eros in 1988. One of the reasons for its creation was to investigate the feasibility of offering a practical computer course to the severely physically limited student who was unable to take courses such as woodwork, needlework and gardening. My direct teaching time was limited, as I was responsible for providing technical support, software development and staff training, along with my responsibilities for training both the young adults in the computer class and the younger students with cerebral palsy. However, one component of my work was filled with exciting accomplishment.

Three teenagers were selected for the computer class. All three students had reached a standard eight

level (grade 10), but had no practical skills for vocational purposes. Instead of struggling with the regular standard nine syllabus, it was decided that the students would only continue with their language courses (English and Afrikaans). The balance of their timetable was divided between computer training and therapy.

As this was the first time anything of this nature had been attempted in South Africa, we were given a virtually free hand in terms of hardware, software, and curriculum development. BBC computers had played a major role in the education of severely disabled cerebral palsied children in South Africa for five years, but it was felt that IBM machines would be more relevant to a vocational training program.

The physical abilities of the young people varied, but all were able to use a conventional keyboard. Leon Levack is twenty years old and is diagnosed as C4 quadriplegia. He used a battery operated hand splint to hold a typing stick. However, this was soon discarded, as he found it more comfortable and easier to type using a mouthstick. Jolene Naude, eighteen years old, was born without limbs and had already become very proficient on a keyboard using a mouthstick. Twenty-one-year-old Michael Reed has muscular dystrophy. He was only able to type for short periods at a time with one finger on each hand. In order to prepare the students for open-labour work opportunities, commercially available software was used. Because the students were unable to use combination keystrokes, a resident program, "Prokey", was used which allows for "one-finger" keyboard access to most software packages. The students were introduced to a word-processor, "IBM Writing Assistant" and the "Lotus" spread-sheet as well as to basic DOS commands and relevant computer knowledge.

To make the learning experience more relevant, the students were encouraged to take on real work assignments. The most available source of

material was their language course assignments. Staff members discovered that the students could produce good quality work and often sent reports, lists and notices to be typed. School friends also began using this typing service! The occupational therapy department requested that the typewriter and trolley inventory be kept on computer and this provided a real spread-sheet application. Probably the most exciting job was provided by a local medical doctor who needed someone to type reports from dictaphone. This provided a good opportunity to acquire the skills needed for dictaphone typing. The students, using their own initiative, even designed letterheads for staff members. A lull in work was a great cue for computer game championships, which provided enormous entertainment for students and teacher alike!

By the end of the second school term, it was apparent that all three students would be competent computer operators. Jolene and Leon proved to be good copy typists while Michael was able to cope with more creative work.

It was time to see what job opportunities existed for the young people. Elsa Joubert, an occupational therapist, followed up on an advertisement for a computer operator at a vocational school. As a number of school children had attended in the past, the staff agreed to give our students a three-month trial. Leon and Jolene took turns working instead of attending school. Although the experiment proved successful, it was decided that both Jolene and Leon required more physical assistance to meet personal and work related needs.

It was amazing to witness the development in these three young people during the year. Michael and Leon had been very unmotivated previously. However, both found that the opportunity to do something constructive using the computer was an exciting option to being bored. Michael was able to explore the computer without needing the

physical abilities usually required for other exciting projects. The possibility of his being employed in a secretarial capacity at the school is currently being explored as this would allow him to continue with his daily physical therapy. Leon, who had not been able to do anything for himself since his accident, could now produce creative work. He has decided to move into Cheshire Homes this year and hopes to join a computer business run by some of the residents. Jolene has probably grown the most during the year. The social involvement of working at the vocational centre was uplifting as she found herself being accepted as a regular employee by the staff.

The availability of computer access for the disabled has made it possible for people like Leon, Jolene and Micheal to contribute meaningfully to society instead of being passive onlookers. The project really proved its worth and gave these young people a sense of purpose. This was succinctly put by Jolene who made the following comment to me about her future after one of her days at work: "I want to be a computer lady like you!"

Learning from the world

My one year of working at Eros has reinforced my desire for more current and more extensive information. My first "byte" into technology has been expanded dramatically by conferences in Minneapolis, Montreal, Cardiff, London and Anaheim. As a member of ISAAC (International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication), I have associated with professionals from Canada, USA, United Kingdom, Sweden, The Netherlands, Italy and Israel. I have greatly broadened my philosophy and knowledge, and I and my colleagues have been able to rise above the many prejudices that intensify the social paternalism faced by disabled persons in South Africa.

Without the opportunity to share with people with vastly different

perspectives and experiences, we would have lost invaluable time reinventing numerous wheels. Without the information we gained internationally, Shelly would be in a mental institution and Leon, Jolene and Michael would be sitting at home doing nothing and struggling to survive. I'm now off to Dundee, Scotland, to enter a Ph.D. program in computer science. But I'll be keeping in regular contact with Rina, Shelly, David Boonzaier and all my friends at Eros and Interface.

Thinking back to that first Byte article, it is amazing how every piece of knowledge we have gained in serving the disabled has contributed to what is now a strong and forceful influence upon our community in South Africa. People are viewing others in new and exciting ways. I personally would never have had friends from such diverse backgrounds without my exposure to the international field of augmentative and alternative communication. Working within Interface has given all its members the opportunity of breaking through the indoctrination of their upbringing and the prejudices that we all share as adults.

To continue growing in the field of AAC, I and my associates need ongoing interaction with those who share our vision for the nonspeaking person. I hope I will always be able to learn from the people and the knowledge to be found in every country! □

Reference:

- *BYTE*, Volume 7, Number 9, September, 1982.

Changes Can Bring Sadness

KARI HARRINGTON



Kari Harrington was in the original Blissymbol class of 1971 at the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre. Since then, she has completed elementary school at James Robinson Public School in Markham, Ontario, and more recently high school at Langstaff Secondary School in Richmond Hill. She is attending a life skills class at Markham Participation House, and hopes to move there soon.

I was thinking of what to do for this issue, and my mom suggested writing about my feelings now that I don't go off to school every day. Guess what I did? I burst into tears! It seems that all my bottled-up feelings about how much I miss going to school just burst out. Most kids are very happy when they are finished school. Not me. It was very difficult.

There is so much I miss. I miss the routine of the day — getting up early so I'll be ready for the bus; arriving at school; attending classes; working on homework; writing in my journal; helping my teacher with the computer; giving her ideas on how we might help another stu-

**This section of
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dent learn to read using Blissymbols; so many different things. I miss my bus driver, Brenda. I was lucky to have her for over five years. She was always laughing and joking and made the trips to and from school so much fun. No one could ever replace her. She loved us, and we loved her. I miss Jared, although he only came to Langstaff for my last year. He was in my home room and we travelled on the same bus. Once we got to know each other, we talked non-stop whenever we got the chance. We both like writing stories, but with one big difference. He always writes horror stories. I could hardly bear to read parts of them! The last few weeks of school, we even started to talk in Pig Latin (talking backwards). I would spell words backwards on my Epson and then speak it. Of course, he had to read the screen, because it was the only way you could really understand what I said. It was fun to hear what the word sounded like anyway. Jared didn't have a backup for his own voice, so we had to share my Epson. I think of him often and when I do, I try a little Pig Latin all by myself.

Keeping Busy

Just before I left school, I made up an instruction sheet to help some of my close friends, like Jared and my teacher, Mrs. Innes, talk on the telephone with me. It included a list of the most common questions I might ask, or topics I might want to talk about. If the person on the phone couldn't get what I was saying, I would just have to say "See number, whatever." I tried using this system but it didn't work very well. Now that I have a RealVoice in the Epson, I find it works better than anything, and I can be understood fairly well. I call Mrs. Innes quite often. One day I'll have enough confidence to phone Jared. Maybe my instruction sheet scared him off from trying to phone me, and he won't know how well my RealVoice can work, unless I call him and show him.

Another friend, Kevin, left school a year before me. He had a tough

time too. We get together quite often. Sometimes we talk about how sad it is to leave school and friends behind, but we both try not to think about it too much. We are involved in a Life Skills and Workshop program at the Markham Participation House every afternoon, and I have just started a correspondence course to improve my math skills. Soon I will start work on a Blissymbol project for BCI, and I am looking forward to learning how to use another communication aid besides my Epson. Before I know it, I will be too busy to feel really sad anymore, and I will laugh about the tears I shed over leaving school. Keeping busy and making new friends along the way is the only thing to do. □

Editor's Note:

Readers with news to share in "Family and Community" write to: Kari Harrington, 16 Jonquil Crescent, Markham, Ontario, Canada L3P 1T4

Join ISAAC Now

The International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) offers four types of memberships:

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Our New Member of the Order of Canada



We at ESCI are very proud to announce that Shirley McNaughton has been appointed a new member of the Order of Canada.

The Order of Canada is the highest civilian honour which can be bestowed upon a citizen, and is given to those who exemplify high qualities of citizenship and whose contributions enrich the lives of their contemporaries. The Latin motto of the Order of Canada "desiderantes meliorem patriam" proclaims the aspiration of its

members who, in their lives and work, have shown that they "desire a better country." Those who know Shirley will recognize how worthy she is to be a recipient of the award.

In 1971, working within an interdisciplinary team devoted to helping nonspeaking, physically disabled children, Shirley discovered the work of Charles K. Bliss, *Semantography Blissymbolics*. Since that time, she has worked tirelessly on the application and development of this meaning-based communication system for use by nonspeaking people. Later, in the early 1980's, she was actively involved within the internationally new field of augmentative communication. She has served as program director and then executive director of the Blissymbolics Communication Institute (now Blissymbolics Communication International). She retired from this role in December, 1988 to direct more attention to service and development related projects, writing, studying and lecturing. She is presently the Coordinator of Service for the Easter Seal Communication Institute.

Shirley was made a Fellow of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1983, and a Fellow of the Rehabilitation Engineering Society of North America, 1984 and has been honoured by the Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy, 1979 and the Canadian Teachers' Federa-

tion, 1975. She has lectured and trained professionals throughout North America and in Great Britain, Sweden, Australia and New Zealand. She served as a member of the founding committee and first president (1983-1986) of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

Shirley says her focus for the future is upon the still very strong need for increased knowledge on the part of families and teachers to help augmentative communicators reach their full potential, as individuals with new capabilities to offer society.

We congratulate Shirley on her well deserved honour and wish her well in her future endeavors. □

About the Publisher

The Easter Seal Communication Institute, ESCI, formerly the Blissymbolics Communication Institute, established in 1975, has worked since its inception toward enhancing the lives of nonspeaking people. In its early years the Institute's primary focus was the development and application of Blissymbolics as an augmentative communication system around the world. This role continues through Blissymbolics Communication International, a division of ESCI, but within a broader mandate that reflects the philosophy and perspective of its professional staff.

ESCI supports effective communication by nonspeaking people through:

- (1) Contributing to the field of augmentative and alternative communication in a manner that promotes cognitive, social and emotional growth.
- (2) Implementing services to improve the quality of instruction for augmentative communicators toward the development of cognitive, social and emotional growth.
- (3) Educating, informing and increasing the awareness of those who are in a position to make positive life changes for nonspeaking people.
- (4) Incorporating Blissymbolics Communication International within ESCI, to maintain support for the system of Blissymbolics, considering it to be a valuable means to advance augmentative communication that contributes to development and growth.
- (5) Making augmentative communication materials and publications readily available to those who require them.

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Innovative Use of Technology

SHIRLEY McNAUGHTON

Nancy Lageer is a special education teacher at the Hugh MacMillan Medical Centre School, Toronto, Canada. In her fifteen years at the Centre School, she has taught in a number of different programs including a Blissymbolics Communication class, an integrated class for students eight to thirteen, and now an integrated teaching unit (ITU) readiness program for four to six-year-olds. Ms. Lageer has also been involved in the Microcomputer Applications Program (MAP) research project involving the use of technology in the augmentative communication classroom.

She has a Specialist Certificate in Special Education and is presently working on a Specialist Certificate in Reading.

In this article, Ms. Lageer discusses her program and philosophy in an interview with Mrs. Shirley McNaughton. Communicating Together extends its congratulations to Ms. Lageer on being this year's recipient of the Marshall McLuhan Distinguished Teacher Award.

How refreshing to talk with a teacher of nineteen years experience who is constantly searching, questioning, observing and following the lead of her students. As I visited with Nancy Lageer, recent recipient of the Marshall McLuhan Distinguished Teacher Award, it was easy to see why she had been selected for this honour.

The Ontario awards are named after McLuhan, the late University of Toronto professor who became an international media guru. The award was established last year by the Marshall McLuhan Centre on Global Communications, a nonprofit educational and public policy group,

to honour teachers who demonstrate outstanding ingenuity in promoting communications technologies in the classroom.

Ms. Lageer's innovation and skill in supporting technology were evident in everything I saw — the classroom displays, the room arrangement, the specialized furniture, the children's work projects — but her strongest qualities as an educator have to be her understanding of her students and her ability to orchestrate a school program in which everything the children do provides rich learning through meaningful and important experiences.

When I asked Ms. Lageer to describe the program for which she received the award, she launched into an animated description of an exciting children's world — one in which they can demonstrate their individuality and independence and in which they can explore the things that matter to them. The computer is always present, but it is not singled out from the other planned experiences. Its value is in its integration and in the way in which it relates to all the other activities. Drama, music, gym, cooking were all considered to be of importance, along with the latest technologies for communication and learning.

Incorporating Technology in the Educational Program

The best way to describe Ms. Lageer's program is to quote from her own writing:

It is one thing to have all the latest technology available in the classroom setting. It is another thing to use it creatively and motivate your students to develop an interest in the potential that technology has to offer — such as opening avenues of independent learning, exploration and solving problems.

This is especially crucial for our

young, nonspeaking, non-ambulatory students with cerebral palsy who use Blissymbols and/or pictures and words to communicate. They all need special devices to access our Apple II E Plus computer. By building a classroom 'mini-micro world', which extends across all curriculum areas, the computer becomes not only an integral part of the classroom program but more importantly the children's voice (through voice output) and pencil (through printout).

The first step in building a 'mini-micro world' is to discover a common theme of interest to all children. One year it was Star Wars, another year Wrestling and another year Sesame Street.

We began by establishing an atmosphere, turning our classroom into a miniworld revolving around our theme. We hung banners and theme character cut-outs. Using the computer drawing program PIC MAN, we designed and made printouts of simple objects that would fit our theme. These computer printouts were used as guides to make two dimensional cut-outs. The children made decisions about colour and size and helped to cut and paste.

After choosing theme characters for themselves, the children made these characters out of clay and then wrote stories which were acted out using the figurines.

Theme Language sheets consisting of pictures, Blissymbols and words began to fill our wall space, proving opportunities for the children to add new vocabulary to their communication books or computer overlays for story writing. To the children's delight, computer letters began to appear miraculously on the blackboard, stating problems for different theme characters and demanding a response.

Mailboxes were set up to handle the growing interchange among characters. Logo was introduced, and through computer overlays, children were challenged to manoeuvre their computer character around obstacles

and through mazes on the screen. Gym themes often simulated or reinforced directionality skills explored through Logo. In their wheelchairs, children followed Logo commands written out on maps which would lead them to a treasure hidden somewhere in the Hugh MacMillan Centre School. In creative arts, their stories were dramatized or put to music. When our six nonspeaking students staged a puppet play (using the Dec Talk with its variety of computer voices to speak their parts), I happily realized that all the long hours and struggles with programming and technology were indeed very worthwhile. Their delighted faces, during the long applause by their speaking peers, said it all.

Voice output has proven a powerful tool. It can allow the nonspeaking child the novel experience of actually calling a friend to the computer to read his/her own story. It encourages questioning, commenting, defending, and conversing among peers.

Computer printouts of Logo and Printshop programs provided opportunities for children who were unable to manipulate a pencil, to create personalized drawings, to make legible computer pictures or cards, and to share their accomplishments with a friend. The power of voice and printed output caused children to view technology as extensions of themselves.

The desire for independence has always been a strong drive for many of our severely disabled students who, because of delayed manipulatory learning opportunities, are often dependent on others.

Training on PIC MAN, Blissapple, Mapwriter, Print Shop and Logo programs has provided varied opportunities for students to progress from being passive responders to active doers, explorers and givers. Many children experienced, for the first time, manipulatory cause and effect and spatial concepts as they began to acquire a general sense of competence in controlling their environment. This in itself provided a high motivational factor even though the effort needed to hit the switches or activate the key-

board was quite strenuous and time consuming.

Working with materials derived from their own interests which could grow with them as the theme expanded, kept the computer programs motivating, focused and purposeful.

Divergent thinking and sharing of ideas, opinions and feelings became possible due to creative use of technology. Personalized computer-created banners, pictures, letters and worksheets hung around the room, all affirming each student's control in this environment. He counted for something here. She could make a difference.

In our 'mini-world' environment new concepts such as spatial orientation (directionality and mirror image) and problem solving (estimation, modelling, planning, testing out ideas) are presented, experienced, and reinforced both on and off the computer. Using Logo on the computer rather than "hand-on-hand" manipulation, children are able to explore independently, at their own speed, math concepts such as number, measurement, distance, and angles. The Talking Blissapple program allows the creation of individual disks and overlays containing symbols needed for personalized programming. Students are

encouraged to print stories, answers, or requests and keep a record of their completed work.

The 'mini-world' approach to technology enhances the instructor's ability to assess objectively students' learning potential through observation and analysis of each student's creative, independent performance and exploration.

The lives of the students have been enriched through the development of independence, leading to increased autonomy and decreased dependence upon the instructor. The high interest level and motivation has improved concentration, self-confidence, and certainly increased the students' interaction and communication. Pride in personal accomplishment, both in their own eyes as well as others, is very evident. Through our program, we have sought to plant the seed that our students are doers, independent thinkers, and explorers and that they can manipulate technology for their own present needs and possibly see the potential of technology in future employment.

The learning opportunities provided for students in Ms. Lageer's class at the Hugh MacMillan Centre School, benefit from the involve-



Nancy Lageer with students Justin Scrimgeour and T.J. Eveleigh

ment of many professionals: an occupational therapist and physio-therapist work regularly in the classroom; a speech pathologist and augmentative communication specialist provide frequent consultation and therapy as required. If it is necessary to remove the children from the classroom for therapy, every effort is made to relate their activities to those in the classroom.

Different and Yet the Same

I asked what advice she would give to teachers working with non-speaking children. Interesting, how similar her recommendations were to advice I would expect for teaching any student:

- Be careful you don't limit the child by the program. Move the program to the child. Don't fit the child to the program.
- Be sure the child is comfortable with the technology. The teacher's philosophy and approach is the most important factor. "Kids — you're important! What you have to say is important! What you're thinking is important! You have to get it out! We want you to explore! We want you to problem solve!"
- Pull all areas of assistance together to focus constantly on the child. Continually evaluate the objectives that have been set.
- Use humour and have fun; allow children to be themselves.
- The child has many types of needs. Responding to them is very time consuming. Be careful you don't overlook their educational requirements, as you provide for their physical and social adjustment and development. The needs of the whole child must always be considered and kept in balance.
- If working with pre-reading students, introduce the components of reading before beginning formal reading instruction.

Of special significance to the non-speaking student were her comments relating their special needs for individualized attention and for commu-

nication capabilities:

- As the teacher, build the vocabulary on the children's communication boards, according to their needs and experiences, as you become aware of these in the classroom.
- Have patience as you interact with your students. Don't jump in and try to complete sentences, nor guess at their meaning, nor problem solve for them.
- Prepare children for new communication experiences. Plan ahead and then devote sufficient time to allowing the children to develop their own solutions and strategies. Give everyone the chance to recognize a student's accomplishments when he or she succeed.
- Remember the limitations on what nonspeaking, physically disabled children bring to a task. We must examine what they already know with regard to the task. They must first have the relevant experience and secondly, the means of communication to relate to the topic so the teacher can know where they want to go.
- Create opportunities for speaking peers to learn the augmentative communication systems used by the nonspeaking students. They like to know what the symbols and signs mean and their interest and involvement can open up new learning adventures for everyone.

Questions Still Need Answers

Ms. Lageer was pleased to offer some advice, but she quickly wanted to add her need to ask questions. She recognizes the unique responsibility of teaching students during their early, formative years. Her goal is to provide pre-literacy experiences in ways that suit her students.

Access to writing is critical. Ms. Lageer describes it as "an extension of what's in the child's mind." For the young, physically disabled, non-speaking, reading child, she asks:

"What tool can best be used for writing? How can they experiment with language — both spoken and written? How can they learn about print? How can the required symbols for initiating and asking questions be available and accessible? How can the child ask for new symbols? And how can they best learn within peer groups, with both speaking and non-speaking members, and still have sufficient opportunities for those necessary individualized activities?"

Ms. Lageer faces the same challenges that we tackled in the seventies! Now technology can be added to the teacher's repertoire of provisional solutions. But, thankfully, she is still asking the questions and working with her students toward finding the answers.

As Ms. Lageer says, "Teachers have to know that just having technology available isn't enough."

- What is the child going to do with it?
- How are you going to use it creatively within the total learning program?
- How are you going to motivate the children to use the technology?
- How are you going to integrate it within the curriculum?

Always the questions. Always the innovation with technology. Always the concern for the whole child and their whole learning experience. Always a distinguished teacher! □

Diagnostic Therapy — A Systematic Approach to Assessment for Severely Disabled Clients

BARBARA REID

Dr. Albert Cook, Susan Hussey and Jane Murphy work at the Assistive Device Center, California State University at Sacramento. At the recent ISAAC Biennial Conference in Anaheim, California, they talked about their approach to assessment for clients who are severely disabled. They offer a structure for discovering the capabilities and providing support for clients, who would be declared by many programs as inappropriate for a communication assessment.

Dr. Cook and his colleagues are concerned that a one-time approach to augmentative communication assessment, referred to by them as the candidate model of decision-making, is not in the best interests of severely disabled individuals. By 'severely disabled' they mean people who are:

- very limited in their motor ability, most being able to use only a single switch;
- undiagnosed with respect to sensory or cognitive abilities and communication skills, because of the difficulty in assessing these;
- generally passive in nature — This can be specific to communication, where clients fail to initiate, but is often related to a more general state of passivity or 'learned helplessness'.

The 'candidate' model which, after an assessment process, accepts or rejects someone for an augmentative communication program, would not allow many of these severely disabled clients to be accepted. Dr. Cook and his colleagues prefer a 'continuum' approach, in which they try to move a client from his or her current set of skills through the various levels of communication competence. This could be compared to the diagnostic teaching

process supported by many educators. At the Assistive Device Center, they use a wide variety of technical devices throughout the intervention process, selecting the devices and the pace of the program on an individual basis.

Steps to the First Goal

Typically, the first goal for a client is to develop a consistent response mode so that assessment of his or her other skills becomes more and more possible. These responses are usually made with single switches, and identifying a part of the body to activate the switch is the first step towards the goal.

The second step is to choose a consequence of switch use — some event or object which will be interesting enough to motivate the client to press the switch. Like switch sites and switch models, this 'contingent result' can vary widely from client to client. Once the client begins to hit the switch, the program moves on to refine the response and make it more functional. The team has designed computer programs which help clients learn to hold and release the switch at a particular time.

The fourth step involves using the switch to make choices (e.g. of toys or various switch-activated events), and the fifth is to add symbols to the choice making. These symbols can be auditory (sounds or synthetic speech), or visual (graphic symbols). This last step can be a very difficult one for some clients, as it may be their first encounter with symbolic representation.

These five steps, with their varying requirements for hardware, software and client instruction, represent one 'loop' in a continuing process of training and evaluation. A client who has completed this loop could be assessed for more skills (e.g. cognitive and communicative) than were possible at the start of the program, and new goals could be set for the next training phase. □

Editor's Note:

Dr. Cook's team has prepared resource lists of hardware and motor training software, which can be obtained by writing the *Communicating Together*, 250 Ferrand Drive, Don Mills, Ontario, Canada M3C 3P2.

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Teaching and Learning Bliss'

Through the years, "Blissymbol Talk" has had two authors. First from 1982 to 1984, Shirley McNaughton began the column, then Claudia Wood, from 1985 to 1988, brought her experience in the development of Blissymbolics to this section. The column is now reverting back to its original author for 1989. You are invited to send any ideas or suggestions for Blissymbol learning and teaching to Shirley McNaughton c/o Communicating Together. We look forward to a sharing of teaching approaches and strategies relating to Bliss'.

During 1989, we will continue to share Blissymbol events and include new symbols from time to time. Our focus, however, is going to be teaching and learning Bliss'. To do this, we are going to take a relaxed look at Blissymbols, from a slightly different perspective. Throughout this section the instructor will be referred to using the feminine pronoun and the student will be referred to using the masculine pronoun — just to help us differentiate between the two.

While giving Blissymbol training programs over the past several years, we have noticed that there are key symbols to which we refer in each workshop. By identifying and discussing these symbols, and by relating our personal teaching experiences to these symbols, we seem to help unlock the system for participants. We are going to use these symbols, along with some instructional ideas, as a way of examining the teaching of Blissymbolics.

We have found that the most important thing to learn about Blissymbolics is that it is a system. Its parts relate to each other and because of this, many strategies can be used. We can teach learners to problem solve through the capabilities that the system provides. And by focussing upon the system features of Blissymbolics, we can relate to the benefits of Bliss', not

only within communication, but toward literacy as well. In addition, we will refer to the cognitive growth and social satisfaction supported by successful use of strategies. We hope this will provide an interesting review for those already familiar with the system, and that it will serve as a useful introduction to those approaching Bliss' for the first time. Our emphasis will be that with Bliss', you get two for one — communication and cognitive growth — and along the way you build an excellent foundation for literacy.

Where One Blissymbol Can Lead You

We'll begin with the *mouth* and give some examples of compound symbols that can be associated with this key symbol, as it relates to food.

First, those pertaining to the eating and preparation of food:

food	(to) eat
(to) cook	(to) bake

Then there are the types of food.

There are those that are pictographic and drawn to look like the thing they represent. Some of them contain the shape of the *mouth* symbol:

fruit	berry
vegetable (above ground)	vegetable (below ground)

And there are foods that themselves contain the *food* symbol:

sandwich	spread
pie	meat

Next let's look at *drink* related symbols:

drink	(to) drink
coffee	tea

And let's glance at some places related to eating and obtaining *food*:

dining room	kitchen
restaurant	grocery store

And some meal-related items and terms:

snack	meal
digestion	(to) swallow

So what do all these *mouth* food-related symbols mean to those working with Bliss? Well, any group of Blissymbols offers a rich learning environment for the student and the instructor. The instructor can learn in two ways: First she can discover the capabilities of students through the manner in which they respond to instruction and through their reactions to the various types of symbols (and pictures); second she can enjoy the insights that we all experience from the learning of any new language. And Blissymbolics is an exciting language to discover!

The student can have a myriad of learning opportunities. A valuable structure for examining cognitive development can be found in Josephine Carpignano's and June Bigge's chapter, "Teaching Basic Thinking Skills" in June Bigge's latest book, *Curriculum Based Instruction for Special Education Students*. By relating our instructional interaction to Bigge's and Carpignano's adaptation of Robert Gagne's model of the "Interdependence of Intellectual Skills", we can use Blissymbols to help students clarify and expand their understanding of their world — giving them a stronger cognitive base upon which to build their knowledge and from which to communicate.

A Sequence of Learning Skills An Integrated Model

- Problem-solving Skills
- Rule-Learning Skills
- Concept-Learning Skills
- Classification Skills
- Identification Skills
- Discrimination Skills

Bigge, J. 1988, p.193.

Bigge offers many supportive teaching ideas in her text. I recommend her work to those interested in planning a curriculum that relates to cognitive development. The graphic system of Blissymbolics offers many capabilities to contribute to this process.

For the Preschooler

Let's start by considering a three or four-year-old child beginning to learn Blissymbols. Some symbols or some pictures may already have been introduced and may be

displayed on his communication board to meet immediate needs. The instructor has available many materials from which to select a vocabulary. Over 2,000 Blissymbols are available through BCI publications. Whatever type or types of symbols appear on the student's communication board, plans can be made at the beginning stage of the communication instruction program to introduce a Blissymbol for diagnostic and cognitive learning purposes and to see where it can lead you and your student.

Begin with Discrimination

Let's start with the *mouth* symbol and introduce another body part, the *ear*, to make sure the discrimination task is an easy one, using major differences in the configurations of the two symbols. Lots of support can be given to discriminating and identifying the two shapes. The 1989 Christmas card designed by Janet Haynes and produced by the Blissymbolics Communication Resource Centre (UK) could be used as an excellent prop for discovering Bliss' *mouths*. They could be coloured red. (This could be done every time a small circle is identified as meaning *mouth* within new symbols). For help in learning *ears*, a simple ear can be added to any stick figure or to the three Bliss' choristers on the Christmas card. Any colour chosen by the student could be used (preferably not red). Remember, an instructor who is helping students discover fun ways to learn symbols, can draw attention to the component parts in creative ways that make them memorable.

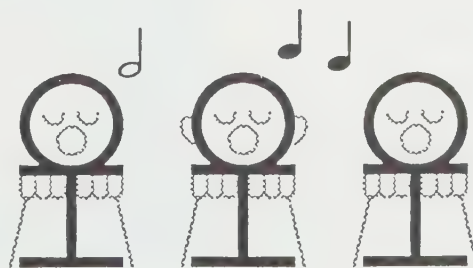


Illustration on BCRC (UK) 1989
Christmas Card

Let's add one more body part to the vocabulary, providing an opportunity for finer discrimination, identification and classification. The *eye* symbol \odot differs from the *mouth*, only by the addition of a dot, representing the pupil. We can give the child experiences in noticing fine differences, in a medium that relates directly to their experience (their own mouth and eye) — preparing them for those fine differences they will need to notice in the letters of print, a medium that relates to sounds.

Now that we have the *mouth*, the *ear* and the *eye*, we can consider the "class" of body parts and think of other symbols we might wish to add — *nose*, *arm*, *legs* and *feet*, *hair*, etc.

As songs, stories and finger plays accompany the learning of body part symbols, the student is participating in the "identification" and "classification" experiences of their speaking peers but within the added dimension of a new language — a visual one.

In the next issue we'll look at the higher learning skills as we continue exploring the program of the young child, using Bliss'.

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For a full explanation of the symbols shown above, see Hehner, B. (1980). *Blissymbols for Use*. Toronto, Blissymbolics Communication Institute.

Blissymbols used herein are derived from the symbols described in the work *Semantography*, original copyright © C.K. Bliss, 1949.

September 1982, C.K. Bliss granted an exclusive, non-cancellable and perpetual, world-wide license to the Blissymbolics Communication Institute, to provide standards for the application of Blissymbols, for use by handicapped persons and persons having communication, language and learning difficulties. In 1987, the Institute was renamed Blissymbolics Communication International.

CATHY FAIRLEY

The Paraphrase is written for those who are moving into traditional orthography. It offers an independent reading opportunity for the growing reader. The Paraphrase is written by Cathy Fairley, former consultant, Easter Seal Communication Institute. In this issue she has paraphrased an article by Denise Ghizzone which appeared in the last issue of Communicating Together Volume 6, Number 4, December, 1988.

My New Voice

Denise Ghizzone is twenty-one years old. This year she got her own Epon. Here is the first part of her story.

* * *

An Epon is one machine that can speak. It has a keyboard, a screen, a printer, and a voice.

I use it with a headstick. I can read my messages on the screen. I can print it out. I can store my message. And I can hear it out loud.

Here is the long story of how I got my Epon. Four years ago I tried an Epon. I tried it for one month. I fell in love with it. It had a voice, it was small, and it was easy to use. I knew I wanted my own. It was four years before I got it.

My therapist left to have a baby. She was gone for three years. In that time I had ten new therapists. Each one tried me on other machines. But I told them all that I wanted an Epon.

My therapist came back at last. It took six more months. Then in February a big brown box came to my house. It was my Epon.

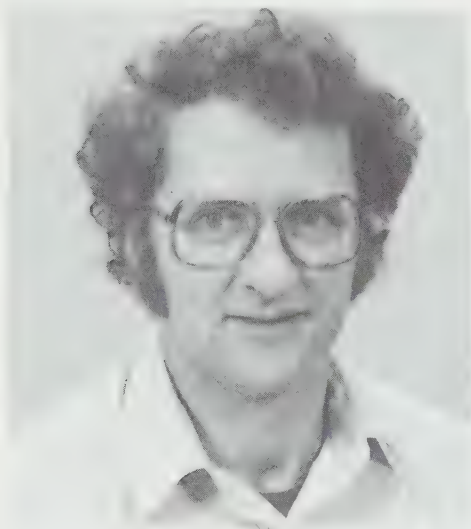
I wanted to wait and open it at school. I was so excited that I couldn't sleep. I couldn't wait to use it!



Denise Ghizzone

A Critique

GEB VERBURG



"Research and Publications" is written by Geb Verburg, who has been involved in the field of nonspeech communication since the mid-seventies. A cognitive scientist, Mr. Verburg is currently working as a research associate in several projects at the Hugh MacMillan Medical Centre, Toronto.

Usually in writing this column I adopt an attitude either as a concerned scientist, an advocate, colleague, or as an objective observer. For what I have to write in this column I could not find a suitable persona.

I have a harsh and unpalatable criticism to make and do not have the proper hat to wear for making it. I will write as myself, subjectively involved in what I observe and concerned about the long term impact of a service model that is widely used in AAC.

Perpetuating Dependency

My criticism is that AAC professionals and AAC devices perpetuate a dependency in their clients/users.

The dependency that I have in mind is the child/user's dependence on others (professionals, facilitators, teachers, parents) to add symbols, pictures, words or phrases to their communication boards or devices. And perhaps worse than that; the (what I perceive to be) common

acceptance that that is as it should be.

It is true that from the very beginning of AAC interventions, professionals and other adults have been the people who have added new words to the nonspeaking person's vocabulary. I want to make a case against this method of AAC intervention on the grounds that it slows down — and in the worst case — halts cognitive development, encumbers personality development, interferes with education and vocational preparation, and denies the user many opportunities of learning how to make decisions, and how to independently organize his/her world.

The origin of the dependency lies in the close connection between cognition and language. I mentioned this connection in my previous column and will not reiterate that argument. Every person uses concepts to think and organize his or her world and life. For a communication board user his or her cognitive development may be fostered by the symbols available on the communication board. But by the same token, the lack of appropriate symbols or the inability to generate independently new symbols or pictures puts a very rigid limitation on the cognitive growth of the user.

I have often acknowledged in these pages, that the ability to communicate is one of the main promoters of independence. I still hold that view but I would like you to look beyond the accomplishment of restoring or creating the ability to communicate.

Communication Is Not A Goal In Itself

The ability to communicate, no matter how important, is not the end goal of life. Communication is a tool, an essential tool, but a tool nonetheless, in attaining life goals and in preparing a person for education, vocational training, and independent living. A system of service provision in which this tool must be updated from time to time by another person is not a viable

long term option. It leaves users too much at the mercy of facilitators, funding agencies, and the environment in which they happen to be placed.

I have watched nonspeaking teenagers grow into young adults. They develop physically as other teenagers. Their personality development is slower than that of age-matched speaking peers but it is certainly not less tumultuous. I have seen how their development became limited by the boundaries of their physical world and by the symbols on their communication board. Only a few of these young adults have developed life goals and career plans. They are the ones with the most active facilitator, often their mother. Many nonspeaking young adults do not have a dedicated and full-time facilitator, and without such a facilitator, it is as if their development slowly grinds to a halt. AAC professionals cannot always continue to provide the service of updating a person's communications, that is, his/her knowledge base. The pressure of new and younger clients means that older clients are placed on a leaner (twice a year) and leaner (once a year) schedule of clinic visits, until they cannot be called in anymore or until they fall under the mandate of a different ministry.

In my opinion, the core of the problem is not the scarcity of dedicated facilitators. The problem lies in a system that does not allow the user to choose the symbols or words with which to communicate and think. I am afraid that if we continue to choose vocabularies for nonspeaking children, we will create more and more young adults who are able to communicate but who cannot make decisions, choose goals, find new paths, new words, new symbols and new ways in which to develop.

Communicating Is More Than Acquiring A Vocabulary

A paper by Yorkston, Dowden, Honsinger, Marriner and Smith (1988) was one of the causes for writing this critique. The authors

review eleven standard vocabulary lists and nine vocabularies from nonspeaking persons. Their aim is to assist in the selection of vocabularies for users. For me, one of their most salient results was that, on average, there is only a nineteen percent overlap of user vocabularies. Thus only nineteen percent of the words of all nine users in Yorkston *et al's* study are common. Eighty-one percent of the words in the user vocabularies were shared by fewer users or were unique to one individual. To the extent that a user's vocabulary reflects his/her way of thinking and communicating, this means that the nine users were distinct individuals, each with their own communication and knowledge base. I think that is as it should be and am afraid of the suggestion made by the authors that it might be possible to provide common core and fringe vocabularies for groups of nonspeaking persons. The dynamics of human cognition will certainly defeat any such endeavour. But the idea of providing the same vocabularies to different people would seem to be about as applicable as forcing a group of people to follow a spinach diet. Just because something is good for the majority of people does not mean that it meets the need of an individual.

A positive inspiration to this column came from two papers relating to the concept of incidental learning. I discussed this process at some length in the previous issue and was glad to find confirmation for those ideas in articles by Kouri (1988) and Valdez-Menchaca and Whitehurst (1988). Both articles supported the idea that even in relatively artificial situations, the child-centred approach of vocabulary teaching was superior to an adult labelling approach. The gist of the child-centred or incidental learning approach is that one introduces the symbol or word at precisely the moment when the child is most motivated by, or interested in the thing named. In this way, learning is most efficient and retention is optimal.

Ideally the role of the facilitator should be just that, and in the best instances, a facilitator is a child-centered assistant. But the facilitator is not always with the child and should not be constantly with the adolescent. In the course of a

day there are many instances in which the child/user is motivated by things or actions. The availability of appropriate symbols, or the ability of the user to instantly create these new symbols and capture these new concepts, would enhance both the user's symbol acquisition and cognitive development. Much more importantly, it would give the user a chance to develop in congruence with events in his/her environment and to develop a sense of independence and control.

There are many consequences of the symbol or picture board user's disempowerment. The inability, independently, to add new symbols/pictures has many effects. In my next column I will look at the multiple effects and at ways in which we can remediate them with current and low technology and also with (near) future technology. □

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What? A College Graduate Working at a Sheltered Workshop!

MARY ANN MERCHEN



The following article provides a focus for teachers to reflect on the end goals of the formal teaching process. Mary Ann Merchen is well educated, but was judged to be unable to work. She gives us an interesting perspective on being assessed for work, as well as the process of coming to terms with the results.

Last June I met Mr. Betty, my new Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) counsellor, for the first time. I asked him if DORS would buy me a communication aid. At this time, he said that he couldn't justify spending a large amount of money before being certain that the expenditure would enable me to work. Mr. Betty told me he wanted me to have a job evaluation to determine what to do with my case.

Twice before, DORS counsellors had told me they would buy me an aid, but they would disappear for six months, not even acknowledging that my resume and request for a communication aid had been received. One counsellor finally arranged to see me. During our meeting she gave me pictures of communication aids to take home and look at. Her offer would have been great if I was not fairly knowledgeable about communica-

tion aids already. This counsellor should have known this fact, since I had indicated on my resume that I have had several articles published pertaining to communication aids. In addition, my resume had stated the communication aids I had used, to give prospective employers an idea of my experience with them. As a result, I interpreted my counsellor's offer as a way to prolong the inevitable, which was to tell me that DORS couldn't buy a communication aid for me. While this fact wouldn't have made me shout for joy, it wouldn't have been as bad as being led on for at least a year.

Needless to say from my experiences with these two counsellors, I was disenchanted with DORS by the time I moved and met Mr. Betty. This feeling actually helped me when he said that he wanted me to go to the Coles County Association for the Retarded to have the job evaluation done. I thought if my case were closed, at least I wouldn't have to put up with DORS counsellors who act as though I am stupid.

My Job Evaluation Process

The job evaluation that Mr. Betty had me undergo is at a sheltered workshop and has turned out to be one of, if not the best, things which DORS has done for me. The job evaluation did not reveal any career that I can enter with my cerebral palsy which causes me to have limited hand coordination, poor balance, and a moderate speech impediment. Since the job evaluation did not shed any new light on work that I can perform in the community, why do I say it was very helpful? Well, now I am working part-time in the workshop as a behavioural observer, recording if a particular behaviour occurs while a client is working, and if so, how many times it happens. While this job is not a challenging one, it is a job where I am getting to help another educated person, while coming into contact with different types of people.

At the present time, the other

clients do not realize that I have my B.A. and am thinking of attempting my Master's in Psychology. The fact that they have a difficult time understanding me because of my speech impediment, combined with the fact they don't know I have as much education as I do, can at times be frustrating, especially when one of the brighter clients talks condescendingly to me. In a way, though, having to deal with this kind of situation is helping improve my self control which I need, if I hope to work with the general public.

Dealing with Problems

Even though people have stared at me all my life, and talked condescendingly to me, I don't have very many ways of handling these individuals. In the past, I usually knew that I probably would not see them every day as I do at the workshop. Knowing I will see the other clients often, I can't just go away from a client and think I probably won't have to deal with or even see the person again, as I sometimes do when a person treats me like a child. While my approach may be fine when interacting with a sales person or waitresses, I have to learn other methods of dealing with people who might need more help than I do, if I hope to work with other handicapped people, including children or their parents. To assist in development of this area, the workshop is providing me the same opportunity it gives to other clients, namely, to improve my skills in hopes of bettering my chances of finding actual work.

The workshop is also giving me something else — an opportunity to be with other people who are handicapped and productive. I am associating with people who, for the most part, take pride in working, making me feel as though my desire to work is not foolish. In addition, most of the other clients are friendly. They say hi, ask me how I am, and try to help by moving chairs. These things have shown me that people who are mildly retarded or who have emo-

tional problems can be as likeable as other people. By going to the workshop, my prejudices about other types of handicaps have lessened tremendously.

Learning a Positive Attitude

Although the other clients have had a great influence on me, Tony McGuire, the job evaluator, is the person most responsible for my positive attitude about the workshop. Before I began the job evaluation, I resented the fact that I was going to a place primarily for people who are retarded or have emotional problems. I also resented taking tests related to my intelligence, especially since I have received my undergraduate degree from Southern Illinois University and am attending Eastern Illinois University as an unclassified graduate student. After the first day, I felt right at home going to the workshop. This was because Tony would tell me how I had scored on each test that I took, though he did not actually praise me. His attitude was one of believing there is no reason for me not to do well, which made me respect him. Moreover, his attitude made me feel he really wanted to help me in searching for work that I am able and qualified to do.

In addition, Tony is patient and makes people believe they are important, no matter how small the job he has them do during the evaluation, which lasted four weeks. For example, when he first had me observe one or two other clients, he would count with me the marks that I had made, making sure he did not count any that I had accidentally made. This showed me that he was going to use my work and wanted it to be accurate, so it would be fair to the clients I was observing.

Now, Tony has assigned over ten clients to me, and I evaluate these clients on eighteen job related items, such as hygiene. In order to give Tony my evaluations, I keep mental notes when I am at the workshop and once I am home, I complete the forms on my computer. The regular forms used by supervisors at the workshop are difficult for me to use, so I redesigned the layout of the forms by increasing the space between each item. I now have the revised form stored

on disk. This helps to ensure that my eyes do not see more than one item at a time.

If the supervisors evaluate clients using the same kind of form as I use, why is Tony having me also evaluate clients on aspects that relate to job performance? Well, he feels that I might notice different behaviours or rate them differently from the supervisors. Since I don't have the same kind of contact with the clients the supervisors do, I should not be biased towards any clients, nor would I write just anything due to the complacency of having to complete the paper work. This might occasionally be the case with supervisors filling out these forms.

Besides evaluating some of the clients who have been at the workshop for a while, I observe new clients and write brief summaries of their behaviours, both in the workshop and during breaks. I also write these summaries at home, using my computer that is interfaced with an expanded keyboard. The summaries give Tony a more complete picture of a new client's behaviour than he would otherwise receive.

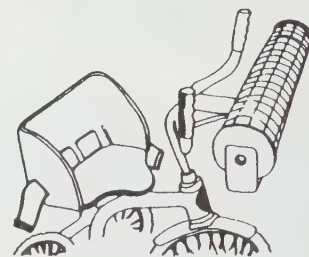
Currently, my position is temporary. However, in three weeks Tony and two other people will decide whether my work as a behavioural observer is useful enough to continue paying me minimum wage. Needless to say, I hope my work is helpful enough, to justify the cost of having me work at the workshop.

Author's Note:

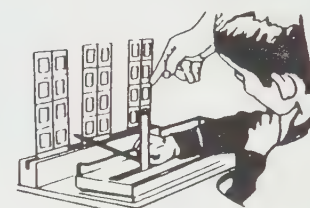
A Month Later: Unfortunately, my work was not useful enough to have me continue working as a behavioural observer. However, my self confidence improved a great deal while I was working, and I think if I had a communication aid, I would have become a supervisor. Who knows! I still may get DORS to purchase an aid for me since I haven't received any notification that my case has been closed. And you can bet, if DORS does buy one, the first place I will apply for a job will be at the workshop. Being a supervisor would look good on my resume! □

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Another Great Wilderness Trip

ANDREW MURPHY



Andrew Murphy is former editor of the "Family and Community" section of Communicating Together. He is now living in Clearwater, Florida, and is a senior in high school. In the summer of 1987 he took his first Wilderness trip, and wrote about it in Communicating Together, (see Vol. 5, No.1). Last summer he was lucky enough to take another trip, and the following article is the report of his second successful wilderness adventure.

In 1987 I had such a great experience canoeing in Northern Ontario with Wilderness Inquiry, I decided to go again this year.

My attendant, provided by Wilderness Inquiry, flew to Florida to spend a couple of days getting to know me. I was very nervous before meeting Nancy Simmet. I didn't know if we would get along, and I didn't know if she would be able to understand my way of communicating — eye pointing to an alphabet and word board. My mom and I went to the airport to pick Nancy up, and I said to my mom "How will I know her"? — "Don't worry" she said,

"she'll know you" — but then I knew Nancy right away. She was wearing a Wilderness Inquiry T-shirt, and she was smiling right at me. Kind! Fun! I thought, "Am I ever lucky to have Nancy."

As soon as we arrived home from the airport, Nancy and I started talking. She was able to communicate with me right away using my board. Nancy asked me a lot of questions, and I did the same with her. We talked about what we liked to do, and we planned what we would do in the city of Minneapolis for two days before we left for our wilderness trip.

Nancy and I left for Minneapolis Thursday morning after my brother Jeff made me a stiff Marguerita to help me to relax, as I am a very nervous flyer. I was feeling very grown up because I was flying for the first time without my family. All the way to the airport I was giggling and laughing from the drink Jeff made me, but the effect had worn off by the time I was to board the plane. I needed a Valium to relax again. Dad carried me on the plane and Nancy sat in the seat right next to me. She held my hand and helped me to relax. I then tried to sleep but couldn't. We started reading Christopher Nolan's book *Under the Eye of the Clock* but had difficulty following it. You needed a dictionary to understand all the words. He's so smart.

We finally landed and rented a station wagon and drove to Nancy's townhouse. I laid down on her white carpet in the living room while Nancy listened to her telephone answering machine messages. Nancy phoned Patti, my trip leader from last year who told her we would get together the next morning for breakfast with Susan Fishman, Ann Bancroft and Eric. Nancy and I went to check in at the Days Inn Hotel which was close to the University of Minnesota. We dropped our bags off and went to Arby's for dinner, a

short walk, then back to the hotel and to bed. No wonder Nancy called me "Dragon Breath" — I was so tired I didn't want to brush my teeth. Early the next morning we drove to the Dome to purchase our tickets for the Twins baseball game that night. Then we went out to breakfast with all my friends from the Wilderness Inquiry trip last summer. It was great and fun to be with old friends. Everybody looked the same except that Patti had had a haircut. Susan told us over breakfast she was not able to join us on this trip. I was very disappointed (Susan was terrific last summer), but I did feel comfortable with Nancy, so it was O.K.

As we walked around downtown Minneapolis, I thought the city of Minneapolis looked a lot like downtown Toronto. There were many tall buildings, the city was very clean and there were many different kinds of people. We walked through a mall that had some very expensive shops — and an atrium. We arrived back at the Days Inn about 4:00 p.m., and Nancy packed all our gear for the trip while I rested until 6:00 p.m. Then we were off to the baseball game. I really liked being in the Dome watching the Twins play — even though they lost. The Dome is huge and there were so many people. We really had fun.

And Off We Go

Saturday morning we woke up early. It was trip day. Nancy and I were the first ones to arrive in the University parking lot at 6:30 a.m. We ate McDonald's pancakes while we waited for everyone else to arrive. The group all came over to meet me. I thought they were nice.

In the van I sat next to the window with Nancy in the middle and Tom in the aisle seat. Tom had difficulty speaking. We were not able to understand him very well at the beginning. Tom used my communica-

tion board to talk to Nancy and me. Now the three of us could talk together. Nancy was interpreter between Tom and me.

We stopped driving after 5:00 p.m. It was pouring rain. Lucky for us friends of Greg Lais' invited us all to stay at their place on Rainy Lake. We went into their big house for dinner and the group set up the tents on the lawn. Before dinner, Dave, our trip leader asked me to tell Nancy something about myself which she could share with the group. Why had we come to Wilderness Inquiry, what our expectations were and what goals had we set for ourselves? After dinner everyone talked about their expectations (mine were to make new friends and to grow as a person). Dave asked us if we were afraid of anything. I told him I was afraid of the tip test — I knew what was ahead.

That first night, we slept in our tents on Sheila's lawn, it was still pouring rain. Sheila invited us into the house for breakfast. We didn't think we should make fires on her lawn to cook breakfast. I had my last drink of milk for the next seven days. It was the last great meal we had for a quite a while. Our wilderness adventure was about to begin.

We packed up the tents, loaded the van, and drove into the Province of Ontario. When we reached the spot where the van would be parked until our return one week later, we unloaded everything, the van and the trailer with all the canoes. Kristi Rott (a leader) spent some time teaching us how paddle a canoe. Then Nancy put me in a canoe with Kristi and Leonard.

Leonard had come on the trip to be with his son, Rob, who suffered from seizures. Leonard had tried everything to help his son. He had taken him to many different doctors, he had had his medication changed often, and nothing was working. Leonard was really hoping the trip would be a good experience for both of them.

It's always a great experience for me. I liked being with different peo-

ple. I find it so interesting — home is so boring. I like being in a different environment. When we stopped canoeing around 7:00 p.m. for dinner, I was tired but I felt good after our first day. That evening we had rice and vegetables for dinner. I had a hard time eating this meal because it was so dry — so Nancy put a lot of butter on my dinner and then I could eat it. Normally Dave, our leader, liked to have group discussions after dinner, but this night I was just too tired to sit around, so Nancy and I went off to the tent so I could lie down and we could talk alone.

The Tip Test Again

The next morning we made French toast for breakfast. It was a hot, sunny day. Dave announced that today would be the day for the tip test. I told Dave I didn't want to do it — "I did it last year." He told me, "I'm not going to make you do it — you decide for yourself."

Nancy gave me a bandana and told me it was for good luck. I thought it was terrific having this good luck bandana around my neck. (Now I wish I had had it to write my SAT exams). With Nancy's encouragement, my lucky bandana and telling myself not to be a wimp, I decided to go for it.

Nancy, Dave and I were together in the canoe and they kept rocking it until it tipped over — it turned out to be fun. We did it three times.

I wasn't able to drink from a cup while I was sitting in the sling seat in the canoe but Nancy was worried about me in the hot sun. She thought she'd be bringing me home looking like a piece of beef jerky. That night after dinner, Dave came up with the idea of giving me a drink with a squirt bottle used by cyclists — it worked! I liked it right away.

On Tuesday, Leonard's son Rob had a seizure and hit his head on the ground near a rock. People came to help him right away. Later Dave had a talk with Leonard. He was worried about Rob's safety.

After dinner Tuesday night Dave read the trip story I wrote after my experience with Wilderness Inquiry last summer. I felt really good sharing my story with the group.

Early the next morning Eric told us that Leonard and Rob would be leaving the trip because Dave was so worried about Rob. I didn't want them to leave. I felt badly for Rob — he didn't want to go either. Dave, Kristi and T.J. took Leonard and Rob back to the van. We all felt badly they had to go.

Thursday we went on a trip in the canoes but returned to the same place to sleep because Dave was coming back to meet us at this spot. When Dave came back Thursday night, we had another big talk about Rob and Leonard.

A Day of Portages

Friday was our biggest day. We had five portages in one day. On one short portage T.J. decided to carry me with my life preserver on. I stopped breathing because as T.J. was carrying me the life preserver slipped up and it was choking me; my body became stiff. T.J. ran to Nancy by the water, who took off the life preserver, then gave me a drink. I was O.K. — T.J. said he was sorry for choking me.

Nancy was so kind to everyone in the group, especially to me. I wondered all the time why she likes working with disabled people, why she liked being with me. I felt badly Nancy didn't get paid. She was a volunteer. Nancy always wants and does good things for other people.

Saturday morning it was raining. I didn't eat any breakfast. We got into our canoes and paddled back to the van. When we reached the van the rain had stopped. We took group pictures then everyone got into the van and we headed back to Minneapolis. The lunch stop was our first non-wilderness meal in eight days. It was great! I began my meal with milk, milk and more milk and then a

burger. We arrived back in Minneapolis about 6:00 p.m.

Nancy and I thought it would be fun to invite T.J. and Eric to join Kristi and us for a pizza party back in our hotel room later that night. When we arrived at the hotel, Nancy gave me a much needed bath and then I lay down to watch T.V. I promptly fell asleep and stayed asleep even while my friends visited. I was too tired to party.

The next morning I slept in. We missed the first airport limousine at 6:20 a.m. We got on the next one at 6:40 a.m. When we arrived at the airport, Nancy was waiting for us. She fed me McDonald's pancakes for breakfast while Kristi ran around looking for my bag that was forgotten in the van. Then the three of us left for the ticket counter. We were

told they had given our seats away because we were late, but we ended up with late boarding passes and first class seats. After Nancy and I had a tearful and sad good-bye, Kristi and I were alone for the trip back to Tampa.

Kristi and I talked a lot on the plane. We really didn't know each other well. We hadn't had much time during the trip to talk. We had a smooth flight and my mom and dad came on board the plane as soon as we landed at Tampa International Airport. Kristi and I became good friends in the two days before she went back to Minneapolis. We were both so tired we didn't do very much. I said to my mom "I feel like a wimp", and Kristi said "So do I."

I felt very good about this trip. I thought I was becoming quite inde-

pendent of my parents. I had flown to and from Minneapolis without them. I thought this was a good start in getting ready to go away to college. Now that I'm a senior, this is very important to me. I feel more mature and I know more about life.

A special thank you to all my friends at Wilderness Inquiry for another great experience.




Editor's Note:

Andrew is interested in hearing from anyone who knows about a good college that might be suitable for him. If you have information, contact him at 3278 Masters Drive, Clearwater, Florida 33519, USA.

For information on Wilderness Inquiry II, write, 1313 Fifth Street, S.E., Suite 327, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414, USA. □

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The Florida Language Speech and Hearing Association.

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David Beukelman, Pat Mirenda.

Contact: Nancy Brown, University
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Purdue University — Indiana

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Nonspeech Communication. Lyle
Lloyd.

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Communication Intervention with
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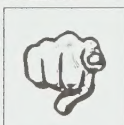
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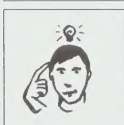
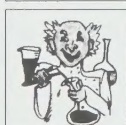
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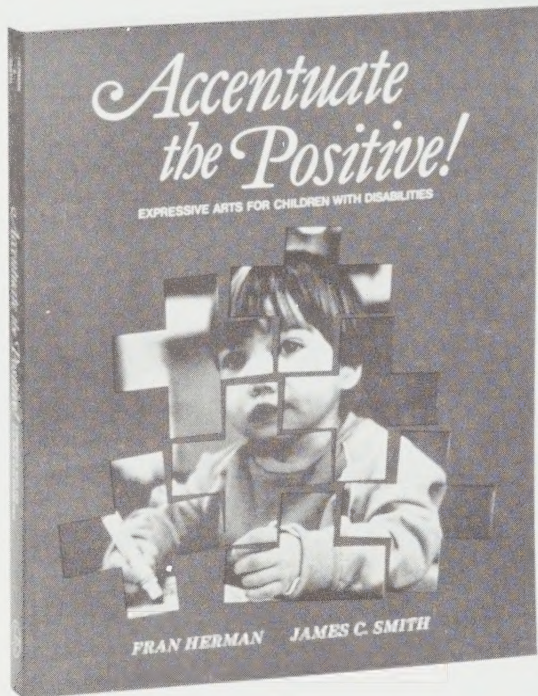
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